

Record

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Donations to hurricane relief effort

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) is accepting donations to fund both the immediate needs and long-term Mississippi Baptist disaster relief efforts along the Gulf Coast and throughout the state. Checks should be made payable to MBCB, with "Hurricane Relief" noted on the memo line, and mailed to MBCB Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Fully 100% of the donations will be used directly for hurricane relief. More information on how to contribute can be obtained by calling (601) 292-3206, or e-mailing mbcdbdisaster-relief@mbcb.org.

Family builds relationships in Africa

Editor's note: All names in this article have been changed for security reasons.

NORTHERN AFRICA (BP) — Four American women — a missionary named Molly, a journeyman named Susan, and two volunteers — sit among a dozen or so African prostitutes in a circle of mismatched chairs and a couch. They all listen intently as the Old Testament story of Joseph and Potiphar plays from a cassette. From the hall outside comes the sound of Molly's toddler Joshua playing with African friends.

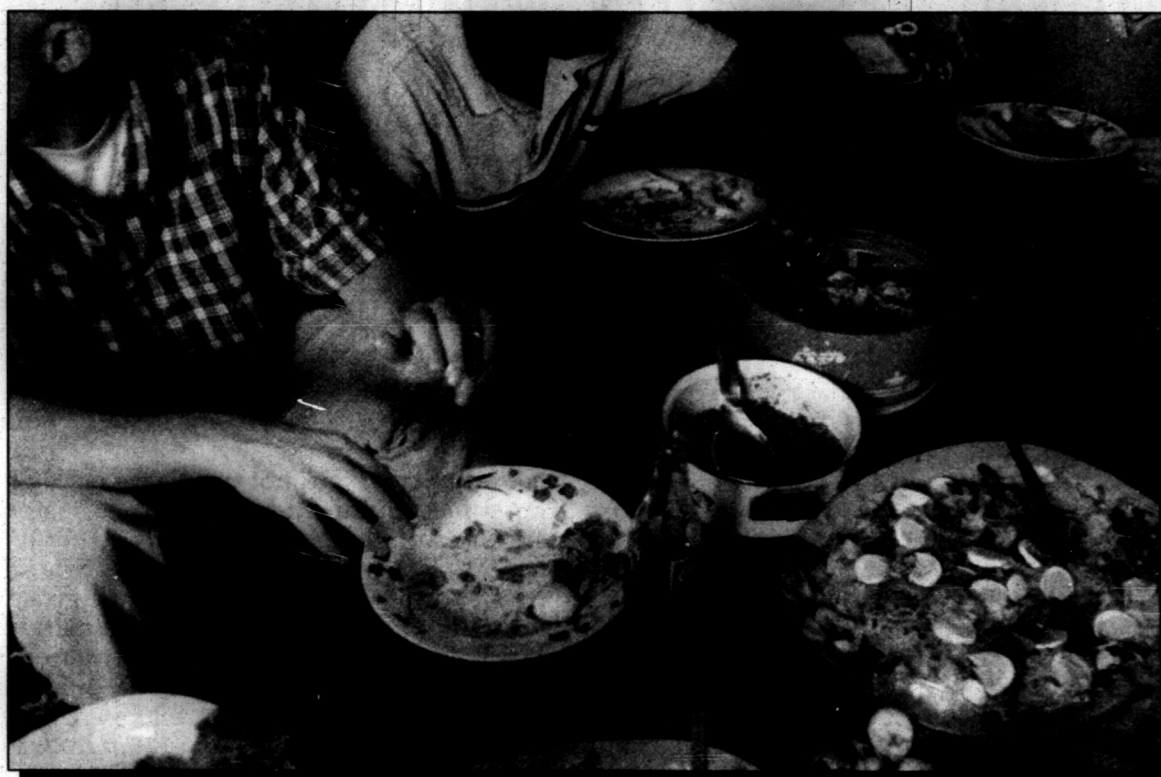
In a home across town, Molly's husband Mike pulls dishes from the cabinet and sets out two pans of lasagna to thaw, getting ready for the evening's house church. Christopher, the couple's three-year-old, throws a ball outside with a neighbor.

Mike and Molly Turner serve as strategy coordinators in a capital city in Northern Africa, where the overwhelming majority of people follow Islam, while some hail from a cultural Christianity but don't have a personal relationship with Jesus. Evangelical Christians make up a much smaller segment of the populace.

The Turners, who have been missionaries for more than five years, adopted the strategy-coordinator role about a year ago. As strategy coordinators, they do ministry much like a healthy church would, Molly says. They look at the community, assess its needs and look for ways to meet the lost. But they don't do it alone.

They're building a strong team, joined by other missionaries, African believers, volunteers, and even a Southern Baptist church that works with them in the coordinator role.

Unlike many couples in which just the husband or wife is the strategy coordinator, Mike and Molly share the role. "We didn't choose to work this way; it's just who we are," Mike says. "God has created us to be a team. It's as natural as it can be."



WARM WELCOME — Hospitality is central to the country Mike and Molly Turner call home. During one volunteer team's visit, a local family insisted on hosting the Turners and their guests for lunch. "The essence of this culture is relationship," Molly says. (BP photo)

They meet weekly as a house church with their teammates — a few journeymen, another career missionary couple and their supervisor and his wife — along with others who happen to be passing through. On this particular night, they have a full house with their team, volunteers from the United States, and a few missionary families on their way to other places.

When Mike and Molly began looking for ways to meet needs and build relationships in the city, education was an obvious answer. With nearly 70% unemployment, people are desperate for better education

to attain a better life. So the Turners and their team started an education center. For a small fee, members study, use the library and computers, and take classes in reading and writing the local language or learning English. Staff members include missionaries, African believers, cultural Christians and Muslims.

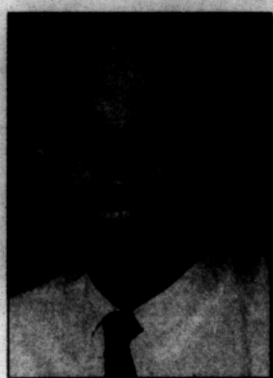
Several individuals have come to Christ through the center, many guided by the gentle honesty of the center's director, Daniel, an African believer.

"I show Jesus Christ to students here," he says. "That's my main job."

McCracken tapped as Collegiate Ministry Director

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Weaver H. McCracken III was selected as the new Director of Collegiate Ministry on December 6 by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) Executive Committee. He had been associate director of the MBCB Collegiate Ministry Department since 1988, and replaces longtime director Jerry Merriman, who retired earlier this year.

Prior to joining the MBCB Collegiate Ministry Department, McCracken served as



McCracken

director of religious activities and Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton, and as associate to the director of the BSU at Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe.

McCracken holds a Ph.D. degree in higher education with an emphasis in leadership development and administration from the University of Mississippi in Oxford; a master of divinity degree in biblical

studies and education from New Orleans Seminary; and both bachelor of science and master of science degrees in forest biology from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He also attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

"I look forward to the tremendous opportunities of working with our BSU directors, churches, and associations to both reach and mobilize college students across our state, our country, and around the world," said McCracken. "Students are worthy of our investment as they will become our future church and denominational leaders. I am both honored and challenged by this opportunity."

David Michel, MBCB associate executive director for mission strategy and McCracken's supervisor, said, "Missionary mobilization is a key strategy in the Acts 1:8 Challenge. For the past 15 years, Weaver McCracken has coordinated the BSU summer missionary program for Mississippi Baptists. I believe his expertise in this arena will serve us well in his new role as Collegiate Ministry Director."

"We are praying that his leadership among students and campus directors will combine to expand the effectiveness of the kingdom of God."



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The battle over 'Christmas'

Now really, is it going to break anyone's jaw to say, "Merry Christmas" at this time of year? To listen to Americans bicker over the issue, one would surely think so.

The argument between Christians and secularists over exactly what this special time of year should be called seems to grow louder and more obnoxious each year, with the secularists complaining that the phrase "Merry Christmas" offends them because they don't believe in Christ.

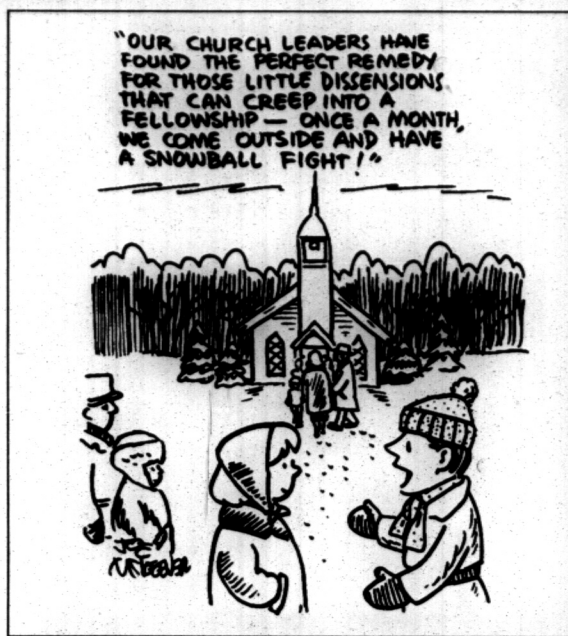
Retailers and advertisers, anxious about losing shoppers during this most crucial time of the business year, have in some cases kowtowed to the small but vocal contingent of anti-Christmas individuals and groups.

American Atheists, founded by Madalyn Murray O'Hair and headquartered in Parsippany, N.J., prefers "Winter Solstice" to "Christmas." Somehow, "Merry Winter Solstice" just doesn't have the same ring. Try saying it ten times real fast, and you'll see for yourself.

Stores have an even harder time trying to avoid the dreaded C-word. According to the American

Family Association in Tupelo:

- Office Max and Staples do not use the word "Christmas" in their advertising.
- Best Buy also avoids the word "Christmas" in its advertising.
- The Home Depot reports, "In order to avoid endorsing a particular set of beliefs and to encourage the diversity we desire, The Home Depot has chosen to refer to this time of year as the 'Holiday Season.'"
- The Nordstrom (department store) catalog does not contain any references to the word, "Christmas."



- E-mail inquiries about Christmas to Outback Steakhouse were rejected with the explanation, "Your message was deleted without being read."
 - Kmart promotes a "Holiday Sale," and refers to "Holiday Shipping Dates" on its web site.
 - Lowe's posted an outside banner announcing "Holiday Trees" for sale, but all the trees were tagged "Christmas Tree." Signs inside the stores did refer to Christmas trees, too.
- William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, told The Washington Post that when he complained to company management at Lands' End — a subsidiary of Sears — about the absence of any reference to Christmas, he received a letter stating Lands' End adopted the "holiday" terminology "as a way to comply with one of the basic freedoms granted to all Americans: freedom of religion."

Even The White House has come under suspicion of committing seasonal political correctness, mailing out 1.4 million cards this year wishing people a happy "holiday season" rather than a "Merry Christmas." (The card also contained a reference to an Old Testament passage.)

"Certainly President and Mrs. Bush, because of their faith, celebrate Christmas," Susan Whitson, the First Lady's press secretary, explained to The Washington Post. "Their cards in recent years have included best wishes for a holiday season, rather than Christmas wishes, because they are sent to people of all faiths."

Down Pennsylvania Avenue a few blocks, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Dennis Hastert had to intervene this year to be sure the Capitol Christmas Tree was called just that and not "Holiday Spruce."

With the country at war and bird flu on the way and natural gas prices doubling each year, a visitor from another planet might be given to wonder about all the national argument over the word, "Christmas."

Here's one explanation: "Christmas" invariably makes many people think of "Christ." Thinking of "Christ" invariably makes many people pause to ponder their salvation and if not that, at least the way they are living their lives. Lots of people don't like to do that, because none of us are comfortable contemplating our own sinful ways before God.

Therefore, let's remove all references dealing with anything that would keep us from living our lives as we please! Out with "Christmas!" Out with "Christ!" Up with "Holiday Season!" Up with "Winter Solstice!" Up with anything that frees us from our spiritual moorings and makes us feel better about ourselves! What a sad, self-centered state of affairs.

Merry Christmas to you, and may it always be so.

Seven-year-old Michael couldn't stop thinking about what the white-haired missionary said.

"For just 50 cents of your Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, you can place a copy of the Good News in the hand of a lost person in Bangladesh," retired missionary Tom Thurman told folks at Michael's church, one of several congregations Thurman and his wife Gloria have visited recently on behalf of international missions.

The Thurmans, Mississippi Baptists who shared the Good News with thousands in Bangladesh as Southern Baptist missionaries for some 30 years, moved on to other topics as they spoke at the church, but Michael kept thinking about putting the Gospel in hungry hands.

"That one sentence struck a chord in Michael's heart," Gloria Thurman said. "He responded by bringing his savings the next night — seven \$1 bills."

As he gave all he had, Michael said, "Please send this to Bangladesh for Bibles."

Michael's generosity prompted his buddy Brice to bring money, too.

"We've been challenged by so many people and their testimonies," Gloria Thurman

GUEST OPINION:



What about 2006?

By Erich Bridges
International Mission Board
Richmond, Va.

said of the churches they've visited this year.

Young Michael's act of love and obedience, though, tops her list.

Sure, a seven-year-old kid doesn't have the financial obligations many of us shoulder, but plenty of adult Southern Baptists have given sacrificially in recent years to the Lottie Moon offering which supports more than 5,000 Southern Baptist missionaries overseas and finances more than half of the International Mission Board's total budget.

Lottie Moon giving shattered records in 2003 as Southern Baptists gave \$136 million for international missions. Last year they gave almost \$134 million.

There's no solid evidence yet of a major downturn in charitable giving. By the end of 2005, Americans are expected to have given more than \$250 billion to churches, charities, and other causes. That would be a new record.

"Charity is like love," said Henry Goldstein, chairman of the Giving USA Foundation, in an interview with The Washington Times. "It is not something you can contain. The people talking about donor fatigue are wrong."

If you're like many average Americans, you're also struggling with job security (or unemployment), gasoline prices, energy bills, medical coverage costs, retirement savings concerns, Iraq war worries. If

you're like me, you haven't even started Christmas shopping.

The Lottie offering national goal is \$150 million, every penny of which will be used to send missionaries and support their ministries. This year, about 800 new IMB missionaries are joining co-workers already on the field in more than 180 countries. Last year, Southern Baptists took the Gospel to 137 previously unengaged people groups and planted the first evangelical Baptist churches among 14 of those groups.

What about 2006? It's been a tough year, but here's hoping we step up for the Lottie Moon offering like seven-year-old Michael. He wants to see the Good News placed in the hands of lost Bangladeshis who may never receive it without his seven-dollar gift, and he's putting his money where his heart is.

Giving to missions is an act of faith. Faith that God will meet our own needs as we give. Faith that He will use our gifts to advance His kingdom. Faith that He will multiply our offerings, like the loaves and fishes another young boy gave Jesus long ago.

Thanks, Michael, for showing the way!

Bridges' commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Homosexual marriage case reversed in N.Y.

NEW YORK (BP) — A New York state appeals court on December 8 reversed a lower court ruling that would have legalized gay marriage, and in the process delivered an opinion that has conservatives applauding.

In a 4-1 decision, the appeals court ruled that a lower court judge "usurped the legislature's mandated role" when she ruled in February that the state must legalize "gay marriage." In that opinion earlier this year, New York trial court Justice Doris Ling-Cohan argued that the "institution of marriage has evolved over time" and that state laws that limit marriage to one man and one woman are discriminatory. Her decision was appealed.

Appeals court Justice Milton L. Williams, writing for the majority, said Ling-Cohan overstepped her authority. "The power to regulate marriage lies with the legislature, not the judiciary," Williams wrote. "... The motion court's decision, by redefining traditional marriage, usurped the legislature's mandated role to make policy decisions as to which type of family unit works best for society and therefore should be encouraged with benefits and other preferences.

"... This is an impermissible intrusion by the judiciary upon the legislative domain. The question of what statutory recognition, if any, same-sex couples should receive in New York is one that must be referred to the legislature in accordance with its historical role."

The lawsuit was brought by five homosexual couples who had requested but were denied marriage licenses in New York City. They then sued the city clerk. The homosexual legal group Lambda Legal, which represents the couples, said Dec. 8 it would appeal the decision to the highest court in the state, the New York Court of Appeals. The case is one of at least three in New York state seeking the



legalization of "gay marriage," although this is the only where homosexuals have won on at least one level. Lambda Legal attorney Susan Sommer said in a statement that "history shows that fairness under the law will eventually prevail."

Massachusetts remains the only state to recognize "gay marriage," although a ruling from Washington state's Supreme Court is expected any week now. Massachusetts' law was changed in the infamous Goodridge decision by the state's highest court.

The Alliance Defense Fund, a conservative legal group that filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the New York case, praised the decision.

"If we have a balance of powers, then a court does not trump the legislature," ADF attorney Glen Lavy told Baptist Press. "A court can say what is constitutional or what is not, but it does not have the right to create its own laws."

"... [Homosexual activists] have to be devastated. This is the Northeast. New York and Massachusetts are very similar in ideology, and for a New York appellate court to come out with this decision had to be devastating to them."

Williams and the other justices heard oral arguments in September. In his decision,

Williams said the majority found it "troubling" that Ling-Cohan — upon finding that the marriage law was unconstitutional — "proceeded to rewrite it and purportedly create a new constitutional right, an act that exceeded the court's constitutional mandate and usurped that of the legislature."

Ling-Cohan said the words "'husband,' 'wife,' 'groom' and 'bride,'" in state law "shall be construed to mean 'spouse,' ... and shall be construed to apply equally to either men or women."

"Deprivation of legislative authority," Williams wrote, "by judicial fiat, to make important, controversial policy decisions prolongs divisiveness and defers settlement of the issue; it is a miscarriage of the political process involved in considering such a policy change."

The majority asserted that marriage between one man and one woman benefits society and that the state has a legitimate interest in limiting the marriage definition.

"Marriage promotes sharing of resources between men, women and the children that they procreate; provides a basis for the legal and factual assumption that a man is the father of his wife's child via the legal presumption of paternity plus the marital expectations of monogamy and fidelity; and creates and develops a relationship between parents and child based

on real, everyday ties," Williams wrote. "It is based on the presumption that the optimal situation for child rearing is having both biological parents present in a committed, socially esteemed relationship. The law assumes that a marriage will produce children and affords benefits based on that assumption."

New York state's marriage law, Williams argued, assumes that marriages will produce children. The law "affords benefits based on that assumption."

"[The law] sets up heterosexual marriage as the cultural, social and legal ideal in an effort to discourage unmarried childbearing and to encourage sufficient marital childbearing to sustain the population and society; the entire society, even those who do not marry, depend on a healthy marriage culture for this latter, critical, but presently undervalued, benefit."

"Marriage laws are not primarily about adult needs for official recognition and support, but about the well-being of children and society, and such preference constitutes a rational

THE BAPTIST Record

policy decision. Thus, society and government have reasonable, important interests in encouraging heterosexual couples to accept the recognition and regulation of marriage."

Lavy noted that in 2005 alone, conservatives have won marriage legal battles in Indiana, New Jersey and New York.

"[They are] three very strong opinions — all of them criticizing Goodridge for adopting the commitment model to marriage rather than the procreation model," he said. "... Goodridge is really standing out there as an aberration."

For more information about the national debate over gay marriage, visit <http://www.bpnews.net/samesexmarriage>.

Wal-Mart hypocritical?

NASHVILLE (BP) — Wal-Mart's British subsidiary, Asda, is selling wedding cards and "commitment rings" for homosexuals. The New York Times reported December 7. The new products come as Britain legalizes civil partnerships, which grant homosexual couples the legal benefits of marriage. One card reads, "Wedding day wishes, Mrs. & Mrs.," according to The Times. Another says, "Congratulations, Mr. & Mr." "Ever since gay weddings were given the official go-ahead, we've had a number of customers asking if we could introduce gay cards," Asda spokesman Ed Watson told The Times. "With the launch of our new range, we can ensure that our customers can celebrate every marriage — whether it is between him and her, him and him, or her and her." Conservatives criticized the move, saying Wal-Mart is two-faced — conservative in the United States, but liberal elsewhere. In the U.S., Wal-Mart has refused to carry objectionable books, magazines and CDs. "They want to be all things to all people anywhere but in the United States," said Tracy Sefl, research director for Wal-Mart Watch, told The Times. "In the United States, they have a conservative, right-leaning business model."

Looking back

10 years ago

A campaign to monitor "trashy TV talk shows" has been launched by the American Family Association and endorsed by Richard Land, head of the Christian Life Commission.

20 years ago

A Birmingham, Ala., couple, and a retired Navy chief from Windsor, Mo., file suit against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee, saying they were "irreparably harmed" by rulings at the annual SBC meeting in Dallas.

50 years ago

Mississippi's largest rural church, Macedonia in Lincoln County, holds dedication services for its new two story, 30 room annex. The building, valued at \$75,000, cost only \$6,000 to construct because of volunteer labor.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer
with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my
sins and freedom from eter-
nal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and
rose from the grave to forgive
my sins and to restore my
relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus
Christ into my life. From this
time on, I want to live in a
loving relationship with Him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior
and Lord.)

"But as many as received him,
to them he gave the right to
become children of God, even to
those who believe in his name."
(John 1:12)

If you make a decision for
Jesus Christ today, contact a
local Baptist church for spiri-
tual guidance.

AMERICA BLESS GOD

It is not unusual to be driving down the road or in traffic and see someone with a bumper sticker on his or her car that says, "God Bless America." Usually that is all it says and as a rule it will be in red, white, and blue. It reminds me of the way God has blessed America. All the way from our founding fathers to caring for us through wars, sometimes the ravages of nature and even in our own sinful rebellion against Him, He has continued to bless us. It also reminds me that while God has blessed America our usual response is Lord, bless us some more and so often He has.

Recently, I saw someone with a bumper sticker on his car that I had never seen before and have not seen since. The sign was in the format of the ones you see that say, "God Bless America," but this one said, "America Bless God!" When I first glanced at it I had to take a second and third look because it kind of twisted my mind around. I thought maybe my dyslexia had kicked in and I was looking at it in scrambled order, but that is exactly what it said, "America Bless God!" That started me thinking in a new direction. How many times have we heard someone sing or have we joined in the chorus in singing, "God bless America, land that I love, stand beside her and guide her through the night with a light from above?" It is a beautiful expression and so often comes at moving and meaningful moments of great need. But while our cry is a poetic petition sung toward heaven asking God to bless America what would happen and what is involved in America blessing God? Consider with me for a few minutes what it means for America to bless God.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

If God blesses America it means He cares. There is something powerful about caring. There is something hurtful, frustrating, and painful about not caring. Have you ever been in a situation where it just seemed that no one cared? It could be something like trying to get help from someone at a hospital, trying to get a problem corrected at a business, or maybe just stuck on the side of the road with a car that is broken down. A thousand cars pass and 999 of them do not even bother to slow down and look. The carelessness quickly begins to work on your psyche and you begin to feel the emptiness and the aloneness that seems to multiply the size of the dilemma in which you find yourself. If America would bless God then it would mean that we would care. We would care about those things that He cares about and we would care about those things that often time we just overlook and pass by or we would begin to put in the right priority those things we ought to be caring about because God cares about them in a different priority than we have placed them.

If America blessed God we would care about His work, His will, and His plans for us, and His purpose in us being here. We might begin to care more deeply about those things which He cares so deeply — His church, families, souls that need to be saved, sins that need to be forgiven, and attitudes that need to be reversed.

If God blesses America it also means that He comes. Almost always implied and rarely said when we want God to bless America, we want him to be on our side. Come join with us in the dilemma and in the fight. You may recall in the book of Job when that great old saint was going through his deep valley, three of his friends came. In fact, much of the book of Job is about the discussions that went on between Job and his friends. But if you will remember when Job was having his problems his three friends showed up and initially said nothing. They were just there. The power and ministry of presence is often little known and yet it cannot be overstated. Just to show up and be there alongside of someone going through a great trial is indescribably helpful. When God blesses us what we begin to experience is the peace that passes all understanding because He comes to us. Maybe you have had one of those kinds of moments when God came during a time of great need, and it seems to be etched upon your heart. You may have been in a hospital room all alone, you may have just lost a dear loved one, or you may have experienced a deep disappointment and God came.

If America were to bless God, I am convinced that we will come to Him. Can you imagine the longing that must be in God's heart wanting us to come to Him? We are so busy. We can hardly enjoy our pre-

sent moments because we are preoccupied with the things that are just ahead of us and so from early morning to late at night we hardly find time just to come to God. There have been so many times when my personal prayer life would begin with my confession to the Father asking Him to forgive me for not having time to spend with Him. I had time for me and often times plenty of time for people around me and other times even time for His work, but that is not the same as having time for the Lord.

One final thought is that when God blesses America it implies if not just openly declares that He can. You and I realize that when God blesses us He can step into a situation with power, authority, and with miraculous intervention He can turn everything around. He can and we want Him to, but think about America blessing God for there is so much that we can do if we just would. Oftentimes, we are explaining to God why we can't when indeed, we can. Do you have an unwritten list, often unspoken, but clearly fixed in your life of the things that you can't do when in reality you can. Possibly on your list are things like teach, attend, sing, witness, give, forgive, change, serve, pray, visit, encourage, love, lift, drive, and build. How long has it been since you have shown up before the throne of God with a spirit of can do? When we want God to bless America that is what we want Him to do. If and when America blesses God we will show up with a heart of compassion and passion that says, "Lord, here am I send me."

God has blessed America and it is time for America to bless God.

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Merriman to be honored with collegiate ministry fund

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Jerry Merriman is something of an institution in Baptist Student Union work. During his 35 years of service in Mississippi Baptist collegiate ministry, Merriman was involved in three important assignments:

- Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at Mississippi State University from September 2, 1969, to August 10, 1975.
- Associate Director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) Collegiate Ministry Department from August 11, 1975, to May 31, 1979.
- MBCB Director of Collegiate Ministry from June 1, 1979, to May 31, 2005.

Since 1979, Merriman helped more than 28,961 Mississippi BSU students share God's love through missions service:

- 2,479 BSU summer missionaries
- 7,360 in short-term campus mission projects
- 19,122 in local campus community missions

Merriman retired earlier this year to the accolades of those who worked with him.

"Jerry's tenure is worth a lot," said Weaver McCracken, who served as associate director of the MBCB Collegiate Ministry Department during the final 18 years of Merriman's tenure. McCracken was chosen on December 6 by the MBCB Executive Committee to replace Merriman as director.

"His tenure has been a steady force that has allowed collegiate ministry to flourish. In addition, Jerry never went off chasing rabbits. He was committed to the basics like missions, Bible study, discipleship, and evangelism — core areas of our work.

"Jerry was a great mentor in many ways," McCracken continued. "He allowed you to be yourself, to operate in your area with the gifts you had, and didn't expect everyone to be the same. He accepted individuality very well within the staff."

"We haven't built a lot more BSU centers during Jerry's time," said McCracken. "We haven't had a lot of new work started, simply because we've had our bases covered. The hallmark of these years, though, has been the strengthening and growth of program work. Budgets have increased, involvement has increased, and programs have increased in many places."

So what does BSU offer to a student on campus?

"We believe that BSU in Mississippi offers great opportunities during your college experience," said McCracken. "It's a place where you can find support, encouragement, and

that spiritual development you can't find anywhere else.

"BSU is not a substitute for the local church," McCracken continued. "They provide the basis of the support for what we do financially. The churches are what placed us there, so we try to preserve our Baptist young people and mobilize our Baptist young people for mission and ministry on campus."

BSUs work in concert with other entities. The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, through Cooperative Program gifts, pays the salaries of BSU personnel. Local churches and associations provide the program support for the ongoing work of the BSUs, and sometimes there is support from alumni and friends.

In honor of Merriman's service to collegiate ministry in Mississippi, the Jerry Merriman Heritage Fund for Collegiate Ministry has been established

by the student members of the State BSU Executive Committee. The purpose of the fund is to provide financial support for strategic projects and needs for the Mississippi BSUs both now and in the future. The initial funds came from an offering taken April 8, 2005, during the BSU Leadership Training Conference. Other contributions will come from the individual campuses, plus money given by friends of the Mississippi BSU.

Gifts to the fund can be made through the MBCB Collegiate Ministry Department. Checks should be payable to MBCB with "Collegiate Ministry Heritage Fund" on the memo line.

For more information, contact Peggy Powell, MBCB Collegiate Ministry Department, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS, 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3299 or toll-free outside Jackson, (800) 748-1651, ext. 299. E-mail: ppowell@mbcb.org.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Deacon Ordination, Vardaman Church, Kemper County

1. **Vardaman Church, Kemper County**, ordained Brandon Jones and Robert Smith as deacons Nov. 6. Shown are Keith Jones, Smith, and Jones.

2. **Carroll Association** held its fall WMU meeting Nov. 7 at Providence Church. Shown are Jane Blair, Eloise Brunson, Estelle Cooper, Rebecca Williams, Kathy Burns, and Paula Smith.

3. Regina Bird was recognized for 40 years of service at **West End Church, West Point**.

4. **Juniper Grove Church, Poplarville**, broke ground Nov. 20 on an addition to the existing building. Shown, from left, are O. C. Smith, Melba Smith, James Carlisle, pastor John Sapp, Frances Berry, and Jerry Cuevos.

5. The **Sonshine Girls of Shiloh Church, Big Creek**, enjoyed a day of fun and fellowship at their monthly meeting.

6. **First Church, Ridgeland**, recently ordained Edward "Bubba" Wright as deacon. Shown are pastor Grant Arinder, Wright, and Pam Wright.

7. **Drew Church, Drew**, recently ordained Wade Kennedy as deacon. Shown are pastor Alan House, Glenda Kennedy, and Kennedy.

8. **Mount Pisgah Church, Carroll County**, collected 68 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. Shown are some of the participating children.

9. **First Church, Pearl**, will present the dramatic musical *The Christmas Shoes* Dec. 16, 7 p.m., and Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m.

10. **Pleasant Hill Church, Columbus**, will present a reader's script on the *Bridge of Blood* drama Dec. 18, 6 p.m., in remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the death of Jim Elliot and four other missionaries in Ecuador.



5. Sonshine Girls, Shiloh Church, Big Creek



6. Deacon Ordination, First Church, Ridgeland



2. Fall WMU Meeting, Providence Church, Carroll Association



3. Bird Recognized, West End Church, West Point



7. Deacon Ordination, Drew Church, Drew





4. Goundbreaking Ceremony, Juniper Grove Church, Poplarville



8. Shoebox Collection, Mount Pisgah Church, Carroll County




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PAV GHTQ XSZGWWSH
VGH, WPRW LPGVGSYSJ
XSTASYSWP AH PAF
VPGKTO HGW USJAVP,
XKW PRYS SYSJTRVWAHZ
TAES.

BGPH WPJSS: VAMWSSH

Clue: Z = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Twenty-One: Twenty-Eight.

Corrections

On page eight of the November 24 issue, Don Boone was mistakenly identified as "Dan" Boone. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

On page six of the November 24 issue, the pastor of Immanuel Church, Greenwood, should have been identified as Tommy Williamson, not "Williams." The Baptist Record regrets the error.

COLLEGE NEWS

1. **Mississippi College's** 2005 December Commencement services will be held 7 p.m. Dec. 16 in the A. E. Wood Coliseum on the MC campus, with David Magers delivering the keynote address. Magers is a professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and was chosen by his peers as the 2004-05 Distinguished Professor of the Year. Mississippi College is expected to graduate approximately 220 graduates. Graduation is free and open to the public. For more information on MC's December graduation, contact Office of Public Relations at (601) 925-3239.

2. **William Carey College** celebrates the 2005 Christmas season with several events kicked off by a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony held recently on the Hattiesburg campus. Following a reading of the Christmas story, carols were sung and Student Government Association president Shannon Armstrong lit the trees.



2. Christmas Tree Lighting, WCC

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Why Try?

Romans 15:14-24, 30-32

By Don Hicks

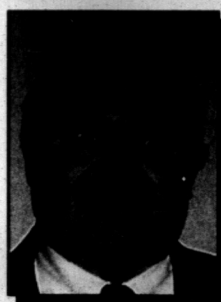
Why try? Why try to witness this Christmas season? Because we have no choice. People around us can always see what we believe because it changes our lives. We are always witnesses to our true beliefs.

For years I have tried to train Christian adults to teach children. One of the principles that I try consistently to explain is that any adult with a child is teaching. Children are always watching and learning from us. Young children are very good at understanding our real motives and intentions. We have no choice as to whether we teach or not, but we can affect what we teach children. We can learn to teach better

what we want to teach.

Paul apparently knew this concept applied not only to children but to anyone we are around. Look at what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:14-15: "But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ, and spreads through us in every place the scent of knowing Him. For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." [HCSB]. Everyone in the room can smell your scent. As Christians "we are the fragrance of Christ." A strong fragrance can still be smelled in the room even after the wearer has left.

Another emphasis of the Apostle Paul in these verses is



Hicks

God himself.

Paul told the Romans they were competent to instruct one another. Paul believed the Holy Spirit gave the Roman church what it needed to teach and instruct its members and the lost around them. Paul was teaching the priesthood of all believers; we can, through the Holy Spirit, find the truths of God and share them with others.

Paul says he has written boldly to them because of the grace God gave him to minister to Gentiles. This grace of God to minister included the priestly duty to proclaim the Gospel. Since we believe and teach the

that the fragrance of Christ is known to both the saved and the perishing. In our focal passage from Romans chapter 15 Paul says he is convinced that the Roman Christians were full of goodness. Paul was convinced of their goodness because he knew it was a gift from

priesthood of all true believers in Christ, we must also teach the "duty" of every true believer to proclaim the Gospel. Proclaiming the gospel is not the special privilege of the ordained or the clergy but the privilege and responsibility of every believer.

Why try? Because the cost of not trying is too great. Those who do not accept Christ are perishing. Anyone who has not placed his faith in Christ is lost, and we should proclaim the good news of Christ to them. A Christian father or mother who does not want to see their children perish will proclaim the Gospel to them. I can not imagine a loving parent not wanting their own flesh and blood to have eternal life. Isn't it good news that every Christian daddy is a priest with the duty to explain to his child that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life? No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. [This explanation of the Gospel comes from John 14:6.]

In our focal passage Paul also

identified a couple of personal preferences. In verse 20 and following he says he wants to evangelize where Christ has not been named so that he is not building on someone else's foundation. Most of the time those of us living in the United States with our Christian traditions are not telling folks about Christ and the Gospel for the first time. But today in our country we can not be certain that the people around us have ever heard the true Christian Gospel as taught in Holy Scripture.

The other unique role Paul claimed for himself was "the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:15-16 [NIV]. This leads to the question — What grace has God given you to be a minister of Christ Jesus?

Hicks is a member of First Church, Clinton.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Concern of God

Romans 11:1-2, 5-6, 25-26b; 28-32

By Shirley Heap

Do we as God's children have the love and compassion for the lost that Jesus had as He looked out over Jerusalem? Can you imagine He may have wept as He spoke, "How often I would have gathered you together, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not." (Luke 13:34). Our hearts should be so soft and pliable toward those who are lost that we might shed a tear. In our daily lives we persevere in our concern and prayers for a touch from our Lord to heal a sick child. How much more should this be for a lost soul. Oh, that we should have the same concern that Christ had for a lost and dying world.

None are Rejected,
Romans 11:1-2

Another question in verse 1, "Has God rejected his people?" Paul springs back emphatically. "Absolutely not!" Do you get the feeling Paul is a little frustrated with this insinuation that constantly comes to the forefront of Jewish belief. Paul is so intent on his people knowing exactly what God is doing. He used Elijah as an example. He speaks of his own ancestry. All of these were made righteous by their faith. No, God has rejected no one. Even today, God's plan is still in motion. We do not see the full picture, but we do know that in God's foreknowledge a remnant is always here. Election is by grace and only by grace. Even though God's chosen people refused to believe, this did not nullify God's eternal plan. "Our God



Heap

is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). This verse gives me such security in a troubled world.

Some are Saved,
Romans 11:5-6

Even today as God speaks (and He does through His Word) many refuse to believe but He always has a "remnant according to His grace." Note the KJV in verse 6 is different from the HCSB, "But if it be of works..." is not in the HCSB. Two different Greek manuscripts were used. This does not change the meaning of verse 6. "Now if by grace then it is not by works, otherwise grace ceases to be grace." Nothing could clarify this statement any better. Some Jews had accepted this grace and became believers. This is exactly what Paul was telling them. There is no difference between the Jew and Gentile as concerning salvation. All come by faith and faith alone.

Some are Jealous,
Romans 11:11-15, 25-26a

We know that Paul was sent to the Gentiles as an apostle. Yet, here in several chapters in Romans that we have studied in the past few weeks, he is strongly speaking to the Jews. Paul wanted his fellow countrymen to have the freedom he had found. He spoke of their stumbling over the stone that was to bring this life to them and yet Paul makes it clear that fall was not a total failure for them. No! God is still Almighty and He is still at work. The Jew's transgression of rejecting the Christ is certainly a blessing to the Gentiles and verse 11 says, "To make Israel jealous." Such great riches have been brought to the rest of the world by their unbelief and yet Paul says in the "fullness of the Gentiles" how much more will the Jews that do believe, receive. It speaks of "all Israel" and many understand this to be a "spiritual Israel" that will occur at the second coming. This doesn't infer a general salvation of all Jews any more so than the "fullness of Gentiles" infers a general salvation, but only those who

will receive God's grace by faith. We must help all to see their need. We do not fully understand God's ways, but we can trust His authority and demonstrate to the world that our faith is not in "our faith" but faith in our Lord.

All Can Be Saved,
Romans 11:28-32

God was not able to use the Jews to present the gospel to the world because of their rejection. As Gentiles, we are so blessed to have the opportunity to spread the gospel, but we should never forget that only by God's grace are we so favored. Also, we need to remember God's great love for the faithful of the Jewish nation who received a covenant from God that will be completed. We have all been disobedient and yet we have received mercy. All have this same opportunity. God's wisdom is certainly beyond our comprehension. Why not? He is God.

Glory be to God in the highest! Amen.

Heap is a member of Calvary Church, Waynesboro.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted.

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Please make articles concise. Include the **who, what, when, where** details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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THE BAPTIST
Record

Federal judge: forget prayers 'in the name of Jesus'

INDIANAPOLIS (BP) — Ministers who open Indiana legislative sessions with prayer must refrain from praying "in the name of Jesus" and from using Christ's name, a federal judge ruled November 30.

In his 60-page decision U.S. District Judge David F. Hamilton cited Supreme Court precedent in ordering Speaker of the House Brian Bosma to keep future ministers from using "Christ's name or title or any other denominational appeal." The prayers, Hamilton wrote, must be "non-sectarian."

A nominee of former President Clinton, Hamilton sits on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana.

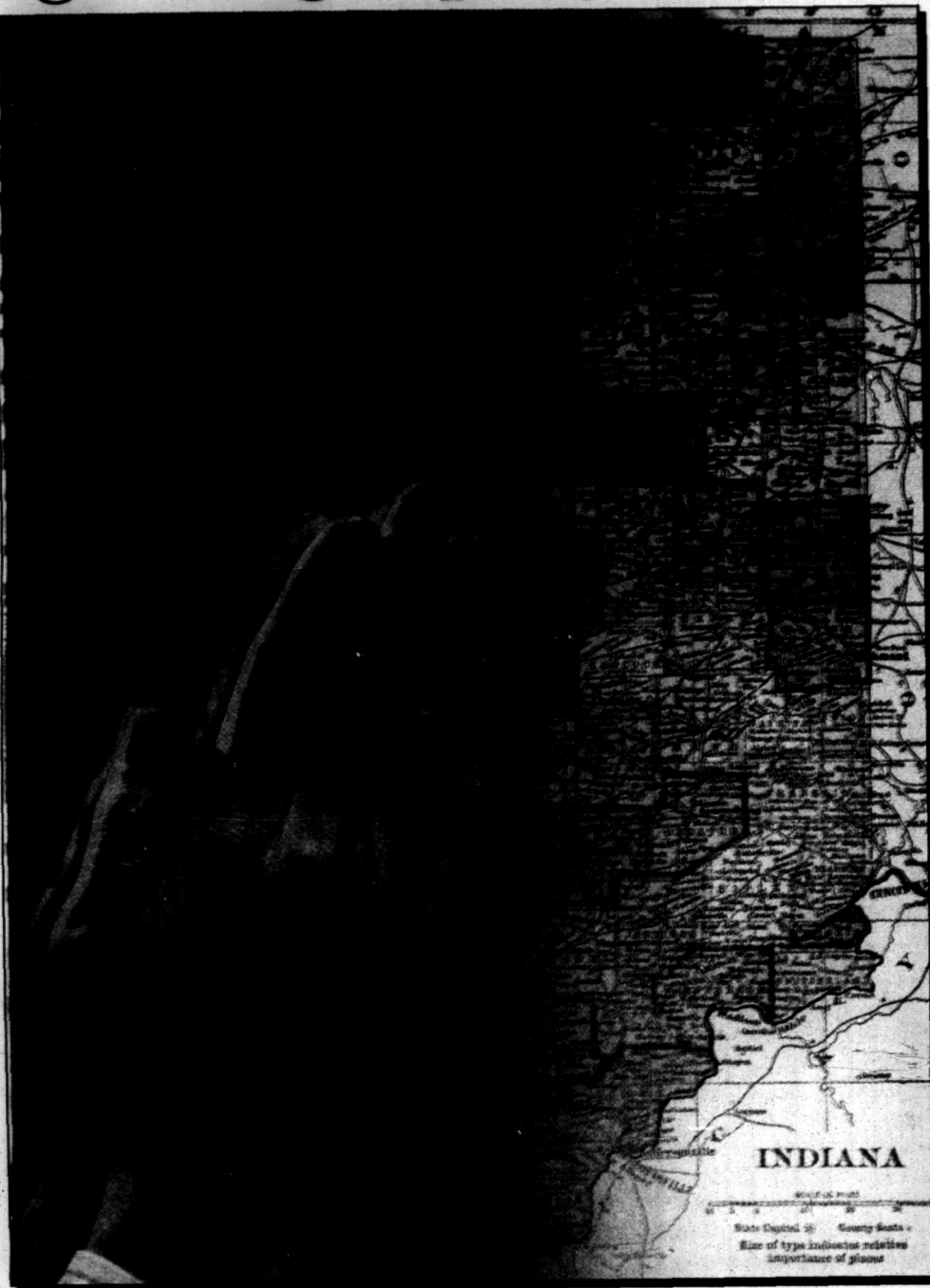
"All [ministers] are free to pray as they wish in their own houses of worship or in other settings," Hamilton wrote. "The individuals do not have a First Amendment right, however, to use an official platform like the Speaker's podium at the opening of a House session to express their own religious faiths."

The lawsuit was brought against Bosma by the Indiana Civil Liberties Union (ICLU) — the Indiana affiliate of the ACLU — on behalf of four Indiana citizens. One is a member of the Society of Friends (Quakers), another is a retired United Methodist minister, and two are Roman Catholic.

The ICLU did not ask that the prayers be discontinued altogether — only that the prayers not be sectarian and include Christ's name.

Curt Smith, president of the conservative Indiana Family Institute, said he is encouraging Bosma to appeal the decision to the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

"Clearly, [Hamilton] has issued an opinion which flies in the face of the First Amendment, as well as the Indiana State Constitution," Smith told Baptist Press. "His ruling engages in what the lawyers call viewpoint discrim-



ination, in that he is banning prayers in the name of Christ. That is discrimination against Christian prayer alone."

Bosma, a Republican, said he was "shocked" and "dismayed" by the ruling.

"I find the court's unprecedented decision disturbing in that it directs me, as speaker, to advise people that they are pro-

hibited from using 'Christ's name or title or any other denominational appeal' when offering the invocation in the Indiana House of Representatives," he said in a statement.

"It is intolerable that a court in this free society would ask a person to censor the prayer they offer in the tradition of their faith. The prayers that

have been offered in the Indiana House of Representatives have represented many faiths of both our members and our citizens."

Minority Leader B. Patrick Bauer, a Democrat, also criticized the decision and said he would support Bosma if he decides to appeal. The Indianapolis Star reported. Bauer called the decision "untenable."

According to Hamilton, the 2005 legislative session included 53 prayers. Forty-one were delivered by Christian clergy, nine by representatives and one each by a Muslim, a Jew, and a layperson.

At least 29 of the prayers, Hamilton said, were offered in Christ's name in various formats. One pastor, Hamilton said, read from Colossians 3:15-17, which reads, in part, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Another pastor, Hamilton said, was allowed by Bosma to sing Just a Little Talk with Jesus as "legislators, staff and visitors present in the chamber stood, clapped and sang along." Some representatives, Hamilton said, walked out during the song.

"After reviewing all available transcripts of prayers from the House sessions in 2005, the court finds that, the actual practice amounts on the whole to a clear endorsement of Christianity, sending the message to others that they are outsiders and the

message to Christians that they are favored insiders."

Some ministers, Hamilton said, have stated they won't participate in future prayers if they aren't allowed to pray freely in Christ's name.

Hamilton cited the Supreme Court's 1983 *Marsh v. Chambers* decision, which let stand Nebraska's practice of allowing a chaplain to open sessions with prayer. But Hamilton pointed to a footnote in the *Marsh* decision which states, "The content of the prayer is not of concern to judges where, as here, there is no indication that the prayer opportunity has been exploited to proselytize or advance any one, or to disparage any other faith or belief."

Hamilton ruled the Indiana prayers proselytized and advanced the Christian faith or disparaged other faiths.

"The prayer opportunities have frequently and consistently been used to advance the Christian religion," Hamilton wrote.

Bosma said the legislative prayers neither proselytize, advance, or disparage "any faith or belief."

"In my years of service in the Indiana General Assembly, I have always appreciated the diversity and sincerity with which the invited clerics and members have led us in the invocation," Bosma said. "The ruling ... forbids invited ministers and members to continue to exercise their right to free speech and pray in the tradition of their faith."

Said Smith: "I think [Hamilton] absolutely misunderstands the prayers that were offered, and I find it quite ironic, because he is the son of a United Methodist minister. Someone who prays fervently and passionately to their Lord Jesus Christ believes He's God and acts accordingly, and that speech is among the most protected rights we have as Americans. The case is *Hinrichs v. Bosma*."

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